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ABSTRACT

In an era with corporate layoffs, budget freezes, and plant closings, Lake Michigan College (LMC) is providing job training services in the economic revitalization of Southwest Michigan. The college's Corporate and Community Development Division, in cooperation with the Berrien County Economic Development Commission and the Cornerstone Alliance, is seeking to retain, expand, and attract business and industry for Southwest Michigan's economic revitalization. LMC is currently involved in several productive business and industry partnerships focusing on the basic skills employers want (e.g., knowing how to learn; reading, writing, and computation competence; listening and speaking skills; creative thinking and problem solving; and organizational leadership). Among services provided through these partnerships are: (1) testing and providing basic skills training in the workplace for Gast Manufacturing Corporation; (2) the revitalization of Employee Involvement Teams at Bendix Automotive Systems; (3) a Total Quality Management program for Dunlop Automotive Composites; and (4) a training and retraining program focusing on transition training for computer and artificial intelligence training applications and strategic long-term training at Whirlpool Consumer Assistance Center. To be most successful, training programs to deliver workplace skills should begin with a detailed action plan; use a systematic approach to training design, development, and delivery; and integrate job functions with job training using an applied learning approach. A chart listing steps for success, and a checklist for community and economic development are included. (AYC)

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Building Effective Partnerships

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COMBASE 1991 Annual Conference
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COMBASE 1991 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
"Building Effective Partnerships"
Anne E. Mulder
Jack N. Wismer

In an era with corporate layoffs, budget freezes, and plant closings, **Lake Michigan College** is providing significant job training services in the economic revitalization of Southwest Michigan. Through our Corporate & Community Development Division, the College is working in partnership with the Berrien County Economic Development Commission and the Cornerstone Alliance (formerly Community Economic Development Corporation) to retain, expand and attract business and industry for Southwest Michigan's economic revitalization.

> "The key to our nation's economic future is how well we improve the quality of the American workforce. . . Continuing education and training must increasingly be an integral part of the American adult experience. We must reinforce the idea that learning doesn't end with high school, or even college, but is a life-long experience."
>
> William E. Brock
> Secretary's Commission on
> Achieving Necessary Skills

Partnerships between business and education offer a positive change and challenge to the traditional education approach in preparing workers for the competitive, rapidly changing, economy that we live in today. No longer can the American education system operate separately from the training needs of our community's business and industry.

Cornerstone Alliance/Community Economic Development Corporation

On July 19, 1991, the Twin Cities Area Chamber of Commerce and the Community Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) formed an alliance to become one organization called Cornerstone Alliance, Council of Commerce and Community Development. The consolidation combines the Boards and staffs of both organizations. Dr. Anne E. Mulder, President of Lake Michigan College serves as Vice President of Planning and Development for the Cornerstone Alliance.

When the CEDC was formed, the leadership felt that it would be advantageous to establish a separate identity to concentrate on new economic development programs and aggressive marketing for the area. Now that the programs are in place, the alliance will add strength and visibility to all efforts.

The mission of the Community Economic Development Corporation is to develop and implement economic growth focusing on the Benton Harbor area. The CEDC Master Plan is based on four

cornerstones. About half of the projects are within Benton Harbor city limits or are shared directly with one or more adjoining municipalities. The cornerstones are:

1. Industrial Park System
2. Recreational and Waterfront Development
3. Infrastructure Improvements
4. Renovation, reconstruction, and new construction of a targeted neighborhood in the Benton Harbor area

A fifth area works hand-in-hand with the basic cornerstones of the CEDC's efforts. This area involves a detailed action plan targeted towards business retention and growth and represents a combination of retention and expansion efforts.

Rebuilding Communities: Demographics

In 1989, Michigan's Twin Cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, part of the Benton Harbor S.M.A., ranked 300 in a listing by Money magazine of the 300 areas in the United States considered as desirable communities in which to live and work. In spite of abundant natural resources, including nearly 100 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline and one of the largest fruit and food producing areas in the nation, the community(ies) had suffered the loss of major manufacturing firms, a serious loss of tax base, and an increasing decline in the literacy level of a large segment of the population. In many ways the community of 200,000 mirrored the position of countless cities, both large and small, throughout the nation's industrialized midwest.

Faced with this dilemma, the community has undertaken the massive task of redefining its commitment to itself and to the residents represented. The emergence of new coalitions, a broad-based community strategic planning process, the infusion of public and private dollars, radical new programs in education and the social services, and a major initiative in developing new community leadership has produced exciting results.

Central to this revitalization is Lake Michigan College. Indeed, the College is considered one of the primary catalysts for positive and enlightened change within the broader community. As an example, a recent local labor force study sparked four areas of proposed training:

- A renewed emphasis on developing programs to keep the educational investment in the community by retaining skilled workers at the entry level and creating an environment where others can be attracted.

- Greater emphasis on training - from the high schools through the community college and by extension and telecommunications courses offered by four year and graduate institutions.

- The development of a "skills inventory" to be completed by minority residents seeking available employment in both new industries and existing businesses.

- The development of a pilot program between the CEDC and Lake Michigan College to train employees for specific entry level jobs identified by area employers as being vacant because available applicants are unable to fill the requirements.

While the task is far from completed, the evidence of success is clearly visible. The most recent Money magazine poll placed the S.M.A. at 248, some 52 slots ahead of its previous listing, several corporations have opted to open or enlarge their operations in the area, the tax base has improved dramatically, and noteworthy accomplishments for individuals as well as organizations have been achieved. Empowerment of the people has resulted in an empowered community that will be ready to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The Challenge for Business and Education

One of our biggest challenges is building a well-educated, well-trained, quality workforce. Today's jobs simply demand more education. And, training and retraining is tomorrow's competitive advantage for business and industry. As a country, we have not invested in our employees as an economic resource.

Business needs education to develop training programs to upgrade employees skills. Education needs business to help understand the economic trends, labor market demands, and the performance standards expected in the workplace. By working together, we can build a more productive workforce.

Through our Corporate & Community Development Division, Lake Michigan College has created several productive business and industry partnerships focusing on training and retraining. Today, many businesses are finding that their employees do not have an adequate level of competency in Mathematics and Reading to enable workers to keep up with the demands of their jobs. There is a definite mismatch between the kinds of jobs the economy is creating and the qualifications of those employees available to fill them.

WORKPLACE BASICS: SKILLS EMPLOYERS WANT

In October, 1988, the publication, **Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want**, summarized the research conducted under a two-year, joint project of the American Society for Training and Development and the U. S. Department of Labor. This project focused on the seven skill groups as a foundation that employers want and that employees need to succeed in today's workplace.

Three changing forces: demographic, economic and technological, continue to impact the workplace skills problem. These forces impact the quality and productivity of our community workforces, and competitiveness of American companies in a global economy. These forces also challenge community colleges across the United States to become more proactive in building partnerships with business and industry.

Employers want skilled workers with more than the academic trio . . . reading, writing and computation. Today's jobs demand new skills for employees of companies to increase their quality, productivity and competitiveness. What are the skills that employers want? Based upon this research project, the following Workplace Basics Checklist identifies the seven skill groups:

1. **Learning to Learn: Knowing How to Learn**
2. **Competence: Reading, Writing and Computation**
3. **Communication: Listening and Oral Communication**
4. **Creative Thinking and Problem Solving**
5. **Self-Esteem/Goal-Setting-Motivation/Career Development**
6. **Group Effectiveness: Interpersonal Skills, Negotiation and Teamwork**
7. **Organizational Effectiveness and Leadership**

Why are these skill groups important to employers and managers? The 1989 findings of the American Society for Training and Development's National HRD Executive Survey indicate the factors causing an increase in the need for basic workplace skill training listed in Exhibit A. Besides the traditional academic skills of reading, writing, and computation, Exhibit B identifies 13 other competencies identified as important workplace basic skills of companies.

The survey found that only about 25% of employers provide skills training in reading, writing and computation. However, 84% of the companies responding to the survey indicated that the need for workplace basic skills will increase by 1992.

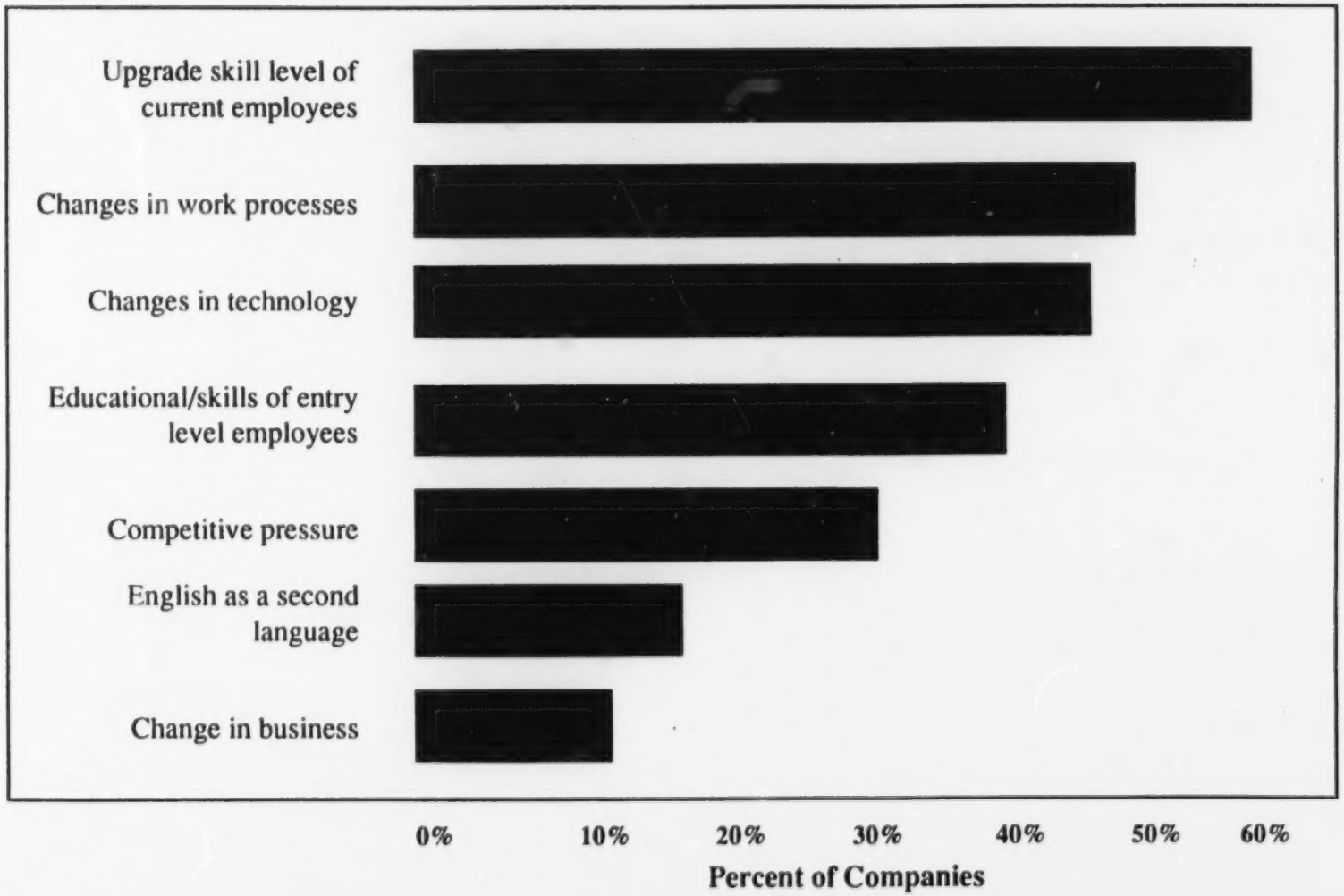
Community colleges, through partnerships with business and industry, continue to be responsive in developing workplace basic training and educational programs to build a skilled workforce. Community colleges have a major role and an excellent track record in "rolling up our sleeves" with business and industry to build effective training partnerships that focus on competence in improving job skills.

The workplace basic skills checklist and competencies provide a solid foundation for developing training and educational programs. Community colleges have a unique opportunity to apply this foundation of skills in working with business and industry to serve their employees. Workplace basic skills strengthen an employer's ability to compete, and for the employee, are key to a better quality of life.

Today's employers and workforce are undergoing a major challenge, transformation and organizational culture shock due to the demographic, economic and technological changes. To address these challenges, most proactive companies are moving, not just to succeed but to survive, toward self-directed work teams.

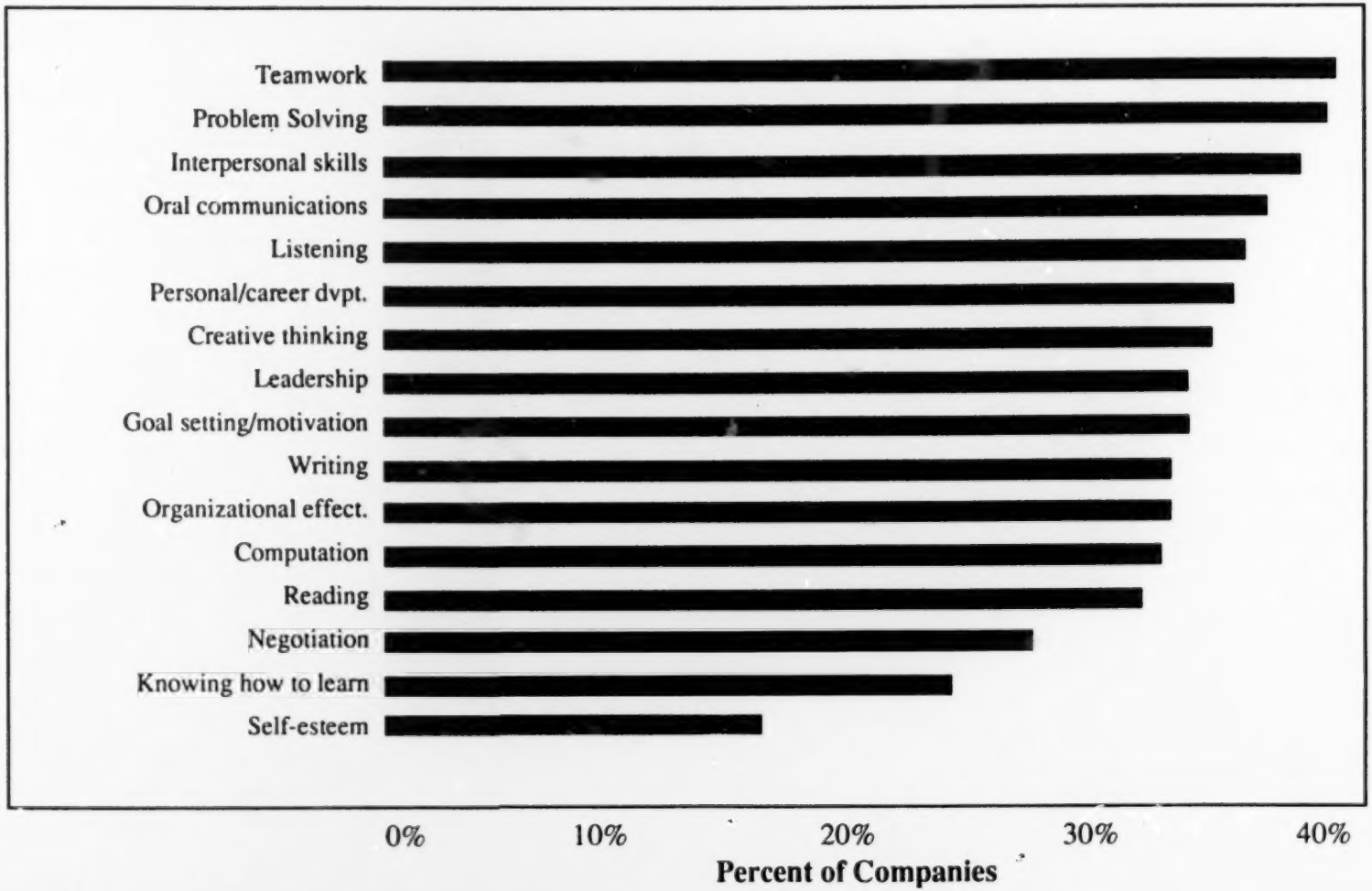
To be successful, tomorrow's workers will need to become more responsible for quality and continuous improvement with less direct supervision. Employees must be able to identify problems, solve problems in the best interest of the organization, and make recommendations to implement a cost effective change. To be successful, employers recognize the need to upgrade the skill level of current employees. Again, community colleges are a natural partner to serve community business and industry.

Factors Causing Increase in Need for Basic Workplace Skills Training



Source: American Society for Training and Development, National HRD Executive Survey

What Basic Workplace Skills Training*
Will Cover, 1990 - 1992



*Training provided to hourly and non-supervisory employees

Source: American Society for Training and Development, National HRD Executive Survey

Integral to the mission of American community colleges is building communities. In **Economic Development: A Viewpoint from Business**, Zeiss (1989:3) emphasized the important role of community colleges: "As uniquely community-based institutions, these colleges have a responsibility to work with local business and industry, just as they have the responsibility to train and educate college-credit students on campus." Workplace basic skill training is central to economic development and growth for communities.

Building effective training partnerships with business and industry is an integral role of American community colleges in serving and building their communities. Being responsive, responsible and flexible to the needs of business and industry also builds a positive image. The following working partnerships provide a sampling of Lake Michigan College's mission in working with business and industry, and revitalizing our community.

WORKING PARTNERSHIPS

Gast Manufacturing Corporation

One of the goals of the Corporate & Community Development Division is to help train a more literate workforce for Southwest Michigan companies. Gast Manufacturing is a progressive, cellular manufacturing, international company that has attacked the challenge through partnerships with Lake Michigan College.

Our Corporate & Community Development Division designed a training program to assess the basic skills of employees in reading and math. Our instructors even conducted assessments during the midnight shift to be responsive to the company's needs.

Goals: Workplace Basic Skills Training

1. Test all hourly employees in Reading and Mathematics to determine their present skill levels.

2. Design classes for employees to improve basic skills in the workplace on a confidential basis.

Results. All 399 hourly employees were tested in reading and mathematics to determine their present skill levels. This testing procedure was paid for by the company. The results were strictly confidential between the employee and the College.

Workers were advised of their math and reading skill level that needed to be upgraded. If the test results indicated that an employee needed instruction, a representative from the College discussed with the employees the classes needed to upgrade their skills:

- 35 employees needed reading improvement
- 64 employees needed a refresher math course
- 274 employees were recommended to take basic math

By working with Sally Schwerha, Director of Continuing Education, these classes were designed and customized for the employee. The employees worked at their own speed to achieve their goals; there was no pressure to "pass". The results of the training were between the employee and Lake Michigan College.

The primary goal of these classes is to improve the employees skills and to help them become a more productive employees. Since 1989, employees still call the college because they have witnessed other employees succeed. Employee are still signing up for training programs today.

The goal of Gast Manufacturing is to continue manufacturing high quality products and to be aggressively competitive in a global marketplace. To achieve these goals, a company must be willing and committed to managing change, and keep pace with the technological advances in their industry to compete globally. To do so, companies must invest in their employees to be competently skilled in reading and mathematics. Gast Manufacturing has made such a commitment to its employees.

The bottom-line is that a company continuously improves quality and eliminates errors. This training program is successful due to three important factors: (1) Management Commitment and Enthusiasm, (2) Responsiveness and Trust in Lake Michigan College to design the program, and (3) Confidentiality to assure employees that test results would not be released. Most important, Gast Manufacturing cares about their employees.

Bendix Automotive Systems

For over 40 years Allied-Signal's Bendix Automotive Systems Plant has been providing job opportunities for the Twin Cities area workforce. To meet the competitive challenges of our changing workforce, this major manufacturer in southwest Michigan has creatively addressed this important issue.

Expanding world competition, higher production costs, and an increasing commitment to total quality emphasized the importance for Bendix to make a long term commitment to training and retraining their employees. Benson James, Senior Employee Relations Representative, has played a key role in Bendix's commitment to training. James says: "Employees are our most vital resource to accomplish our mission. Training is a major component to our competitiveness."

Bendix emphasizes the importance of training by requiring its salaried employees to be given at least 24 hours per year of training during company time. The same policy will extend to all hourly employees. With the need to implement continuous improvement manufacturing methods based on total quality processes, this training policy was the motivating force to develop a training partnership in 1989 with Lake Michigan College.

The College Partnership: In 1983, Employee Involvement Teams (EIT) were formed and 24 teams became active; however, by 1989 only six teams were still meeting. Management decided to revitalize the program. Bendix worked with the College to design a customized training program to meet the business objectives of Bendix.

The College's Corporate & Community Development Division developed a survey and conducted interviews with management, supervisors and union employees to design the initial Employee Involvement Team training. The College customized training modules on listening skills, leadership, team building, group dynamics and problem solving. The training focused on practical job applications. At the same time, Employee Involvement Teams were encouraged to apply these practical concepts and skills with their co-workers and at team meetings.

The Results: Since 1989, over 170 employees and managers have participated in the training. More importantly, Employee Involvement Teams are again active; 17 teams are currently meeting on a regular basis. One team made recommendations to improve manufacturing processes that saved Bendix an estimated $100,000. The training has also facilitated communication between management and union employees to mutually solve problems.

A Continuous Process: Bendix plans to continue the training partnership with Lake Michigan College by providing a comprehensive training plan for all employees. James states, "That's how we can stay competitive. It's our advantage."

Dunlop Automotive Composites

In May, 1990, Dr. Jack Wismer, Vice President of Corporate & Community Development at Lake Michigan College participated in a site visitation by Ford Motor Company and a British conglomerate to build their first joint venture U.S. plant. One of the company's key criteria was available training services to develop a quality workforce.

By December, 1990, Dunlop Automotive Composites announced Benton Harbor as the site for building a 100,000 square foot factory to produce engine components such as thermostat housings and inlet manifolds. The components are produced by molding reinforced materials, using a metal core that melts away and is recycled during the manufacturing process. Composites are considered a growth segment of the automobile industry. Dunlop plans to initially employ 30-50 workers in 1991, growing to 100 in 1992, and possibly double by 1993.

Lake Michigan College is considered the strategic training partner in developing a skilled workforce, and implementing Total Quality Management training for their new employees. A five-phase training plan was developed to help identify a qualified workforce:

1. Needs Assessment: Through a team effort of the College's Corporate & Community Development Division, Marsha Base, Director of Business & Industry Training, and Joy Brayak, Director of the Dislocated Workers Program, worked with Dunlop to identify their employment and training needs.

2. Recruitment and Employment strategy: From a pool of unemployed workers, 60 people participated in a two-day, four-session Employee Involvement Team Training program consistent with Dunlop's TQM goals. Dunlop conducted 40 interviews and initially hired 30 employees. More production jobs will be hired in 1992 when Dunlop is in full operation.

3. TQM Training Program Development: Leonard Seawood from Lake Michigan College is working with Dunlop to develop a customized TQM Handbook which includes 15 quality modules for new employees and a Facilitator's workbook by September 30, 1991. With on-the-job training, Dunlop receives a 50% reimbursement for employee's costs during the training.

4. Training Implementation: Conduct four 8 hour-a-day workshops and two 4 hour-a-day workshops on TQM for new employees by September 30, 1991.

5. Follow-up Training for Continuous Improvement: Over 100 employees will receive the TQM training by 1992. The training partnership will expand to provide other customized training programs necessary to develop a quality workforce.

Lake Michigan College received funding from the State of Michigan Quik Start Economic Development Job Training Grant to develop the TQM training program from May-September, 1991. Lake Michigan's College's training partnership with Dunlop is an ongoing commitment to improve the quality of its workforce through 1992.

Whirlpool Consumer Assistance Center

In January, 1990, Whirlpool Corporation was evaluating 350 site locations across the country to build and expand its Consumer Assistance Center. As part of an economic development proposal to retain Whirlpool in Benton Harbor, Lake Michigan College's Corporate & Community Development Division in partnership with the Community Economic Development Corporation submitted a competitive training proposal to focus on customer service. Dr. Anne E. Mulder, President of Lake Michigan College, and Dr. Jack N. Wismer made a presentation to Whirlpool to have Benton Harbor be considered a site. On March 30, 1990, Whirlpool Corporation announced the expansion of its Consumer Assistance Center in Benton Harbor and Knoxville, Tennessee. This decision kept Whirlpool, the world leader in the home appliance industry, from moving out of Michigan.

Purpose of Training Partnership: Lake Michigan College works with Whirlpool to train approximately 100 new hires and retrain 145 employees. The training systems being designed for Benton Harbor will serve as a training program model for the Knoxville operation. The total training project will be implemented over three to five years.

The expansion of the Consumer Assistance Center will allow Whirlpool to handle about 9 million consumer inquiries annually with state-of-the-art computer technology and artificial intelligence equipment. Whirlpool is focusing on two major training components: (1) Transition Training (technical computer and artificial intelligence training applications), and (2) Strategic Long-Term Training focused on technical job skills, product-related training, continuous improvement and management development. It is estimated that it will take approximately 12,300-16,000 training hours to implement the Consumer Assistance Center.

Lake Michigan College's Role. The Corporate & Community Development Division at the College serves as the strategic training partner. The College works collaboratively with Whirlpool's management and technical staff to facilitate the identification of Whirlpool's training needs, development of specific training modules, implementation of the training delivery system and follow-through tracking system.

The division provides a Training Project Manager and staff, Dr. Charles Long and Rich Witucki to provide training design and delivery services to work with Whirlpool Corporation, outside vendors, other higher education institutions, and Lake Michigan College's faculty and training staff. The primary goal is to create a training partnership in developing a systematic and competency-based approach for results-oriented training.

Target Group. There are three primary target groups for training and retraining: (1) consumer service representatives (CSR), (2) field service technicians, and (3) supervisory and management personnel.

Training Program Needs. The initial training programs will focus on:

- Computer/Communications Systems
- Technical & CSR: Communications/Listening Behavior Skills
- Product Use and Care
- Product Installation
- Technical Training Systems Update
- Quality Trends Reporting

To accomplish the objectives, training workbooks and video-based programs are designed for specific training modules to reinforce the training of Consumer Assistance Center employees. All employees (195) will receive training on the Computer/Communications System. Consumer Service Representatives (50-100) will receive the Technical Product and Communications/Listening Skills training.

Results to Date. Lake Michigan College is providing or assisting in completing the following training services:

1. Developed 22 skill-based training modules with self-paced employee workbooks and leader's guides.

2. Designed tests to measure mastery of knowledge and skills based upon the training modules.

3. Completed five video-based training programs by providing assistance in technical writing, video scriptwriting and video production capabilities for Consumer Service and Technical Field Representatives.

4. Edited and updated 17 training videos with graphics.

5. Produced 60 employee workbooks along with three facilitator handbooks including overhead transparencies, handouts and outlines for the instructor.

6. Trained 85 employees with another 20-30 employees to be trained before the grant project period ends. In addition, 50-60 employees will be trained at the Knoxville facility.

7. Working with Whirlpool representatives to facilitate the design of the strategic needs assessment, task analysis and job profile instruments to identify Whirlpool's long range training needs. The selection of a vendor included a competitive RFP bid process.

8. Providing additional training space at the College to assist in the transition of Whirlpool's technical product training needs.

9. Designing a training program evaluation system to identify strengths, areas of improvement and follow-up training strategies.

As Lake Michigan College begins year two of this exciting training partnership, other training possibilities will be identified to assure quality of training services for existing and new employees. The Whirlpool training partnership will also lead to the development of academic credit courses in customer service in the next few years.

WORKING MODEL

How do you establish effective training programs to deliver workplace skills? To be most successful, training programs created to provide employees with increased workplace skills will involve three key elements:

1. Developing a detailed action plan that includes the marketing strategy to gain management and union support, and that integrates the training program with the employer's mission, business objectives and competitive strategies.

2. Using a systematic approach to training design, development and delivery.

3. Linking an applied learning approach by integrating the actual job functions to job-specific training.

The strength of this applied approach represents benefits for both the employee and employer because the focus is on improving job performance.

Community colleges can also benefit by using this applied and functional approach to training when working with business and industry customers. The accompanying "Blueprint for Success" listed in the **Workplace Basics: The Skills Employers Want** (1988:18-19) can serve as an excellent working model outlining the basic eight steps for training workplace skills.

Blueprint for Success

Step I: **Identify Job Changes or Problems Related to Basic Workplace Skills**

- *Assess the extent of the need for training due to job changes or problems
- *Form a company-wide representative advisory committee
- *Perform a job analysis for selected jobs
- *Document employee performance deficiencies on the selected jobs
- *Identify target population for training
- *Build cooperation with unions

Step II: **Build Management and Union Support to Develop and Implement Training Programs in Workplace Basics**

- *Make the case for skills training programs in workplace basics
- *Build support for skills training programs in workplace basics

Step III: **Present Strategy Plan to Management and Union for Approval**

- *Present the strategy plan for training
- *Select a training program architect: In-house staff vs. external providers

Step IV: **Perform a Task Analysis of Each Selected Job or Job Family**

- *Perform a task analysis
- *Determine whether to select a quick route through task analysis, and which process is most appropriate
- *Review the generic elements of the task analysis processes

Step V: **Design the Curriculum**

- *Design performance-based, functional-context instructional program
- *Design evaluation system
- *Design documentation and record keeping system
- *Obtain final budget approval to implement program

Step VI: **Develop the Curriculum**

- *Prepare the instructional format
- *Select instructional techniques
- *Select training site and designate equipment requirements
- *Develop evaluation and monitoring instruments

Step VII: **Implement the Training Program**

- *Select and train the instructional staff
- *Develop a training contract --- yes or no?
- *Pilot test (optional)

Step VIII: **Evaluate and Monitor the Training Program**

- *Carry out initial evaluation
- *Begin on-going program monitoring
- *Connect back to management

CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A successful program is reflected in both the internal operations of the college itself and the external linkages that are subsequently developed and nurtured by the college and the larger community the college serves.

By applying this model, community colleges can continue to provide business and industry with quality training programs. By building effective partnerships, American community colleges have an exciting future in serving their communities. What are the factors necessary to build effective partnerships? Community colleges must analyze its community and college resources. Here's a checklist that can be adapted to your own college and community.

THE INTERNAL COMMUNITY

_____1. The college has a commitment to training reflected in the organization's mission and goal statement.

_____2. The college Board of Trustees supports training initiatives.

_____3. The corporate training division has status evidenced in the organizational structure.

_____4. Faculty understand the significance of the training mission.

_____5. The curricula supports the workforce literacy initiatives.

_____6. Flexibility and innovation in the development and delivery of training is encouraged.

_____7. Dollars and personnel are committed to the training initiative.

_____8. A willingness to serve the community is evidenced.

THE EXTERNAL COMMUNITY

_____1. A partnership philosophy is developed with:

- Business and Industry
- Organizations
- K-12 Systems
- Colleges and Universities
- Government Entities

_____2. An understanding and acceptance of the college as a broker of training services is established.

_____3. A customized approach is adapted.

_____4. Political astuteness and sensitivity are evidenced.

Future Considerations

Training is tomorrow's competitive advantage for business and industry. Training and education is critical to the economic development and the revitalization of American business. As stated in the landmark report by the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges (1988:39), *Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century*:

> "Partnerships with employers for the training and retraining of the community's workforce must be recognized as an important component of the continuing education program in community colleges. We urge that alliances with employers be carefully integrated into existing community college programs and interests."

In our changing economy, education needs to take a more proactive and collaborative role in working with business to determine the skills needed in the workplace. Business needs to increase its involvement and investment in education to develop a competent workforce. Training must be part of a company's strategic goals. Collaborative training partnerships are necessary for educating and upgrading employee skills that will make American business and industry more competitive in a global economy.

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